

In Bitter Tempest: the Biography of Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher

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In Bitter Tempest: The Biography of Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, by Stephen D. Regan. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994. xvi, 288 pp. Illustrations, table, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY J. K. SWEENEY, SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Fletcher-class destroyers served the United States with honor and distinction for several decades. But those long-lived tributes to naval architecture were named for the other Admiral Fletcher: Frank Friday Fletcher was immortalized in steel, whereas his nephew, who commanded the American forces at Coral Sea and Midway, occupies a position of surprising obscurity—a state of affairs, Stephen Regan suggests, that is a consequence of two developments: the animosity of Admiral Ernest King and the misplacing of Fletcher's personal papers.

Admiral Ernest J. King, as Chief of Naval Operations and Commander in Chief of the U.S. Fleet, was one of the architects of the naval victory in the Pacific during World War II. Admiral King was also an exceedingly abrasive and contentious individual inclined to abuse his authority. King did not like Frank Fletcher, and when the early American naval victories proved less than unalloyed successes, Fletcher became the designated scapegoat. Thus, although afforded resources inadequate for little more than limited victories, Fletcher saw his career sidetracked into an administrative backwater because he could not accomplish miracles.

King's unfavorable judgment might have been subsequently altered, save for the unfortunate circumstance that placed Admiral Fletcher's papers in the archives of the University of Wyoming under his wife's name. With the documentary evidence to support a biographical examination seemingly unavailable, historians were less inclined to pursue Fletcher's side of the story. Consequently, when Regan located the missing papers, a more balanced picture of the man behind the battles of Coral Sea and Midway emerged. Unfortunately, Admiral Fletcher was reticent in print and public, and gaps exist in the documentary record. *In Bitter Tempest* provides an intriguing glimpse of the admiral from Marshalltown, but only a glimpse is offered, and Fletcher's Iowa experience receives short shrift.

America Restored, by Carol M. Highsmith and Ted Landphair. Photographs by Carol M. Highsmith. Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1994. 320 pp. Illustrations, suggested reading list. \$45.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JAN NASH, TALLGRASS HISTORIANS L.C.

Page after page, the visually appealing format of *America Restored* matches the architectural gems showcased within it. This large,

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